





INCREASED COMMUNIONS:

A SERMON.

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S E R M O N.

INCREASED * COMMUNIONS.

I CORINTHIANS XI. 28.

“ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.”

ALL restoration to religious privileges involves perplexity and doubt, as well as thankfulness and joy. For restoration is not the natural order of God's Gifts. He formed His creatures very good. He re-created them still in His Own Image. The Church, “the Holy City, came down from God out of Heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband ; †” her dowry complete, full of goodly Gifts and Heavenly Graces ; one in the unity of “the Apostles' doctrine ;” one in heart and soul ; through the fervency of continual prayer, and self-forgetting charity which counted nought its own ; fed daily with “the Living Bread Which came down from Heaven ;” walking in the Light and Glory of God's Presence ; filled with His satisfying Fulness ; guided, and guarded, and hallowed by His Indwelling Spirit. ‡ Such, in His Holy Purpose, was she to remain, filling the earth with His Glory, of Which she was herself full ; subduing and taking possession of the world in His Name, to Which she was herself sub-

* Preached to remove misgivings where Weekly Communion had lately been restored.

† Rev. xxi. 2.

‡ Acts ii. 41-47 ; iv. 31-35.

dued and Which she bore. Prophecy, except in the last days of Anti-Christ, knows nothing of dimness coming again over her light ; her fine gold being tarnished ; her peace broken within as well as without ; her beautiful garments exchanged for the sackcloth of captivity and heaviness ; herself sitting down again in the dust out of which she had been raised. And so, in her children individually. The course of God's appointment is that That Gift which, during our unconscious infancy, He, in Holy Baptism, placed within us, should grow with our growth, unfold with our unfolding faculties, take possession of our thoughts, longings, feelings, impulses, inform our actions, wrap round each developing energy, and turn each strife with sin into an occasion of victory. One onward course, amid and out of occasional stumblings and infirmities consistent with the state of Grace, is the path marked out for the Church to win the world, for the Christian to gain access to the Throne of God. Restoration implies fall and previous negligence ; and falls, in proportion to their grievousness, imply some withdrawing of the Divine Light and Presence ; and His diminished Presence, a proportionate misgiving and perplexity.

We need not then be amazed in ourselves, if we do find ourselves in perplexity, either when we, as we hope, are being restored individually, or as God's returning Favour to our Church, year by year, opens to us new and manifoldly increasing Gifts, which we before had not. " Can this be for me ? " the penitent soul will often cry out, " me, who am not worthy of the Crumbs, which fall from His Table ? me, who deserve only to be without ? Am I thus to be brought within His Palace, and placed in His Presence ? I, in the tattered garment for which I have exchanged His Robe of Righteousness, to sit down in His Marriage Feast ? I, thus leprous, to be brought thus close to His Purity ? an outcast and a

wanderer, to be bid to ‘sup with Him, and He with me? *’” And in those happier cases, where the conscience has not been *freed* only, but has remained *free* from darker taints of sin, and bears witness that, amidst whatever of human infirmity, the heart’s desire has been to cleave wholly to God, and be more singly His; still, on the opening of any new privilege, doubts will arise, and often in the very humblest and meetest hearts, whether they can safely avail themselves of it. Still the question comes back, “are these Gifts intended for such as I feel myself to be, or for those only of more devoted soul, who out of the distractions of the world can rise more freely to God? Is, or can, my life be any way proportioned to the Gift? Shall I persevere? My outward course of life must remain nearly the same: can my heart, amidst it, be inwardly more conformed to God, so that the Gifts for which I would long, if I dared, should be for my profit and to life, and not for my condemnation?”

Then, too, growth in Grace is mostly slow. We seem often, for a time, rather to have come to a fuller knowledge of our own miseries and infirmities, than to be conquering them. The Light, which by God’s Mercy has streamed in, rather shows us the depth of our own darkness. The more we strive, the more we feel the weight which is against us. “Can it be?” people often think, “can the food of Angels, the Fire of Love, the Coal from the Altar, be for hearts so cold, so lifeless, so feelingless?”

Thoughts such as these will naturally arise, when, (as in this place,) more frequent Communion, and Daily Prayers, have been restored. It is right that they should. They are a confession on the part of our fallen, although restored, nature, that it is an awful thing to draw near to the Holiness of Almighty God. In some, such fears may be at once

* Rev. iii. 20.

overborne by love. An ardent longing for the Love of God, or the humble fear of losing any Gift of His, may bear the soul beyond all other fear. Such dare approach, because they dare not turn away. They dare not willingly part, for a time, with That Which makes them "one with Christ." And these too are right. We come to the Physician, not because we are whole, but because we are sick; we come to Him our Riches, because we are "poor and needy;" we come to the Fountain of Light, because we are blind; to "the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," because we are defiled.

Still more commonly, there will be both hopes and fears; and people will be drawn both ways. Humility will both draw and withdraw them. Both may, in turns, seem to be presumption; to hold back, if God indeed inviteth us; or to press in, if we are not such as He would bid.

"It is my Maker—*dare* I stay?

My Saviour—*dare* I turn away? *"

What then? Are such fears, if overruled, to be wholly disregarded? Have they no office for us? Not so. All, fear and love, hope and awe, sense of sin and of helplessness, and longing to be other than we are; all should have one issue, to draw us more closely, yet more reverently to Him, in Whom Alone awe and fear can be hushed, helplessness be stayed, sin be blotted out, infirmities healed, the One Source and Aim of all holiness, and hope, and love. It is a pious prayer of a good man, † "Most Sweet Jesu, Whom Zacchæus received with joy into his house; and Whom the Centurion, out of reverence, did not dare to invite under his roof; Have Mercy upon me, that I may ever combine the feelings of them both, love and fear, whensoever I receive Thee into my house."

* Christian Year, "Holy Communion."

† Paradise of the Christian Soul, P. v. on Devout Communion, Litany ii. p. 27.

It is, then, at once a ground for earnest pausing and entering into ourselves, that any of us has these fears. For the fears are of God. It is an awful thing to come into God's Presence. And each nearer approach to His presence has, and ought to have, awe, and reverent fear. His Presence is awful to Cherubim and Seraphim. Filled though they be with His Knowledge and His Love, they still veil their faces, as they hover around His Throne, and sing their unceasing Hymn to the Ever-blessed Trinity, which we here faintly echo, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. * " The blessed Angels are not pure in His sight, and so must stand with awe before Him, Who Alone is Holy, "how much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm? † " Ever since the fall, man has that within him, which may well make him hide himself, if he could, and which must make him come with shame and confusion of face before the Presence of his Maker. Even righteous men have stood in awe, when God revealed Himself most graciously and in Love. When the Voice of God came unto Moses, saying, "I am the God of thy fathers," he "trembled and durst not behold." He "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. ‡ " And Job saith, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And the Patriarch Jacob, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven. § " Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," retained no strength in him, "for my comeliness," he saith, || "was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." And

* Is. vi. 2, 3. † Job xxv. 5, 6. ‡ Acts vii. 31, 32; Ex. iii. 6.
§ Gen. xxviii. 16, 17. || Dan. x. 8.

Habakkuk says, * “When I heard, my belly trembled ; my lips quivered at the Voice ; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the Day of trouble.” Such was a prophet’s awe and fear. His very inmost self trembled ; it was like the decay of the grave ; he became a weight and a burden to himself ; his “lips quivered” with the Message of God ; that fearing in time, he might “rest in the Day of trouble,” and “have boldness in the Day of Judgement. †”

Our Lord’s first Words to His Apostles, after His Resurrection, were “Peace be unto you, ‡” yet neither these His Gracious Words nor Look hindered that they, terrified and affrighted, supposed that they had seen a “Spirit.” The beloved Disciple, when in vision he saw Him Whom his soul loved, “fell at His Feet as dead. §” St. Paul speaks of that awful Manifestation of God upon Mount Sinai, whereat “Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake, ||” and all terrors of nature were gathered together, the Mount burning with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of the trumpet, exceeding loud, and waxing louder and louder, and the Voice of words,” and “the thunders and lightnings,” when “the whole Mount quaked greatly,” as less awful than our privileges. More awful than the greatest terrors of God in the world of nature is, in the world of Grace, the awe of the Greatness of the Love of Jesus.

Much more is the nearness of God awful to those, who are near Him in presence, but not in heart. The heaviest Judgements have ever fallen on those who have been brought nearest to Him. “I will not go up in the midst of thee,” God saith, after the rebellion in the matter of the calf, “for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way. ¶”

* Hab. iii. 16.

† 1 S. John iv. 17.

‡ S. Luke xxiv. 36.

§ Rev. i. 17.

|| Heb. xii. 21 ; Ex. xix. 6.

¶ Ex. xxxiii. 3.

In Mercy God withdrew His more immediate Presence, lest their unholiness should turn it to their destruction. And they themselves said to Moses, "If we hear the Voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die; go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and we will hear it and do it. And the Lord said, they have well said all that they have spoken.*" And of the Priests it was said, "Let the Priests, who come near unto the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.†" And what is the whole history of God's earlier people, in the wilderness, under the judges, the kings, unto this day, but one deepening tale of heavy chastisement, "a roll written within and without, full of lamentation, and mourning, and woe;‡" "plagues wonderful, and of long continuance," because they "feared" not "that Glorious and Fearful Name, the Lord their God? §" "What nation had God so nigh unto them, as the Lord their God was in all things that they called upon Him for? ||" Yet so were all their sins too done in His very Presence; and He Who was nigh to save was in the midst of them to destroy. His presence was in fire, a Light to them by night, a Guide to them by the way; yet when they sinned, a Fire also to destroy. "Our God is a Consuming Fire; ¶" "a Spirit of Burning **" to consume all evil in us; else would He be a Fire to consume us. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is Mighty, ††" saith the Prophet, but He was "Mighty to save," or "to bring His Judgement to light."

And when He came nearest to His own, even in His Gracious Presence in the Flesh, then did their doom become more awful. The greater the nearness to His Presence, the more awful the peril.

* Deut. v. 28.

† Ex. xix. 22.

‡ Ezek. ii. 9, 10.

§ Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.

|| 1b. iv. 7.

¶ 1b. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29.

** Is. iv. 4.

†† Zeph. iii. 5, 17.

The All-merciful Redeemer pronounced a special woe on those "cities wherein most of His Mighty Works had been done, because they repented not.*" "It shall be more tolerable, in the Day of Judgment, for Sodom and Gomorrha, than for thee."

And so of individuals, how utterly and how hopelessly did the curse fall upon Cain, and the profane Ham! How early the punishment on the mockery of Ishmael! How, for one act of profaneness, did Esau find "no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.†" How sudden and severe the punishment on the Sabbath-breaker, who gathered but a few sticks; ‡ or upon the two sons of Aaron Nadab and Abihu, which God Himself interprets; "This it is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be Sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be Glorified.§" How terrible the living destruction of Korah and his company, read to us by the Church || on the very day which closes the first week of our Easter joy, when our Easter Halleluias sound again, ere yet the words "Who, by His Death, hath destroyed death, and, by His Rising to Life again, hath restored to us Everlasting Life, ¶" have passed from our lips! They had all but the Priestly character, as our Lord "made us" all spiritually "Kings and Priests unto God and His Father.**" Yet how, as they sink down out of our sight, alive yet to death, are they pictures of the living death of the damned in Hell! How irrevocable the sentence pronounced long before on Hophni and Phinehas, or on Saul! How did Satan, after the Holy Supper, enter into Judas and take possession of him, so that even when he repented himself, he had no power left to repent truly. His sentence was pronounced, "Good were it for that man that he had never been born."

* Matt. x. 15. † Heb. xii. 17. ‡ Numb. xv. 32-36. § Lev. x. 3.

|| Numb. xiv. First Lesson for the First Sunday after Easter.

¶ Communion Service for Octave of Easter.

** Rev. i. 6.

And so, of classes of men in this day, it is observed how the young of one profession much occupied with man's lifeless body, too commonly become wholly careless as to death, and callous and profane; how hardened and profligate too many of those become who are most conversant with death. Nay, awful as it is for a Minister of God himself to say it, yet, as St. Paul said, "lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway,*" so it has become an almost received saying among holy men, that more Priests, perhaps, than of any other class will perish.

It is, then, no untrue fear which hesitates and stands in awe at any nearer approach to God. By nature, since Adam "hid himself in the trees of the garden,†" we should all hold back. We might well shrink from God's Presence, but that a mightier fear draws us to It. Nay, mostly, God has "compelled us to come in,‡" lest while we hesitate, we, remaining without, should perish. He *has* brought us all very near to Him, even making us His children, members of His Son. We cannot henceforth, even if the faithless wish should arise in the heart of any, we cannot "be as the heathen.§" We have been brought near: and our only safety is remaining very nigh unto Him, under His very Shadow, yea drawing nigher and nigher to Him. Our only fear should be, lest we "draw nigh unto Him with our lips, while our hearts are far from Him;" lest we be near in bodily presence, but afar in spirit; our bodies in His Courts, our hearts in the world; our bodies touching the Holy Elements of His Body and Blood, our souls alien from His Life, His Virtue, and the Might of His Sacraments.

It is a real fear, lest we injure ourselves in our every approach to God. We cannot have been more immediately in God's Presence, and be what we were

* 1 Cor. ix. 27. † Gen. iii. 8. ‡ S. Luke xiv. 3. § Ezek. xx. 32.

before. Every time we kneel before Him in prayer, in our private devotions, in the service of the week, on the Lord's Day, every time we enter this Holy Place, much more on each occasion that we partake of His Body and Blood, we become other than we were before. We rise up different from what we knelt down. As we were there, careless or earnest; reverent or irreverent; fixed in heart even amid distraction, or giving ourselves to lukewarmness; penitent or impenitent; we arose with a blessing, or the further from God and the more "nigh unto cursing.*" We cannot escape. People only increase their own difficulty by infrequency. The more infrequent people's devotions, the more irreverent are they. For their very infrequency is an irreverence, and deprives them of God's Blessing. If we are cleansing our hearts diligently, He will make the mansion of our souls fit for His reception at all times. If men will not part with their sins, they are never fit for His Presence, here or in Heaven.

It is not then to keep us back from approaching to God that these fears are placed within us. "We are not come into the mountain which might be touched, and which burned with fire,†" and of which God charged, "set bounds about the mount and sanctify it; charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.‡" Our privilege, although on that account the more awful, is that we *must* draw near, *lest* we perish. God putteth not these fears into the heart of any, to keep them away from Him, our True Life; but that we may so approach Him, that we "may have Life, and have it more abundantly.§" He gives us fear before we approach Him, that, approaching Him "in reverence and Godly Fear," we may be before Him without fear; since when we fear, He will say to us, "Fear not."

* Heb. vi. 8. † Ib. xii. 18. ‡ Ex. xix. 31. § S. John x. 10.

Of ourselves, we have indeed all cause to fear. "Woe is me!" saith the Prophet Isaiah,* "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." And we look not only to behold Him, but to receive Him; not to receive Him only, but that He should dwell in us; our spirit united with His Spirit; our bodies hallowed by His Presence, His dwelling-place; we ourselves "members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones.†" Well, then, might we shrink back with awe, and fear, and amazement at ourselves, that we, such as too many of us know ourselves to be, or to have been, should receive Him in the ruined and desolate mansion of our souls. Well might we fear to think of His dwelling there, amid what company! of thoughts of self, or worldliness, or pride, or vanity, or fretfulness, or all the leprous and defiled brood, entailed by former sin. Well might we fear, but that He will be present, not as a Judge, but as a Redeemer; not to condemn, but to save; not to visit our offences, but to cleanse us from them. He cometh to us, Himself our Physician to heal; a Fountain to cleanse; Light in our blindness; Riches in our poverty; a Robe to hide our nakedness and shame; Himself Forgiveness, and Reconciliation, and Sanctification, and Redemption; Himself the Salvation our eyes wait for; Himself undefiled by our pollutions, and, (as once when with us in the Flesh,) cleansing them by His Touch; not partaking of our decay, but "restoring our waste places,‡" that He may dwell there, and by Indwelling restore them.

We need then have no fear, save that we should lose our fear. For where there is fear, there is watchfulness, and humble approach, and earnest caution; and where these are, there is God's Favour, Who, "despiseth not a broken and contrite heart."

* Is. vi. 5.

† Eph. v. 30.

‡ Is. lviii. 12.

And this fear and reverent awe will, if we be watchful, increase with increasing devotion and more frequent Communion. For the more any know God, the more they must stand in awe of Him. The nearer and more habitually any approach Him, the more will He be Present with them, with His Gifts, as well of Love as of "Holy Fear."

Yet although more frequent Communion and more frequent prayer, would, rightly used, and through the Grace of God, produce increased reverence and devotion, and all other fruits of God's Presence and Indwelling Spirit, it is not to be concealed that, unless the heart be firmly fixed and bent on God, there is risk in both, lest "what should have been for our wealth, be unto us an occasion of falling." All through life we have reason to fear, lest we lose our first fervour, and our service become languid and formal. The danger is not more imminent on more frequent service. It attends all. At first, we are mostly awed from without. However little any may know of the reality of God's Presence in this House of Prayer, or that our Lord is indeed in the midst of us, more truly and fully present than we ourselves are, or however poor the thoughts of the best must be of the Ineffable Mystery of the True Presence of His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist, it must be some ground of awe, (which all feel,) that this is indeed the House of God, that That is the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. If the whole soul becomes, by God's Transforming Grace, more reverent, this reverence too will deepen with increased Communion and deepening years. And yet we know too well, this is not mostly so. Imperfect as are the prayers of childhood, too many must look back with a sorrowful yearning even to their childish prayers, ere distraction had become a habit, and unbidden thoughts carried away their uncontrolled minds, and the captive mind returns more

slowly to recollection of itself and of God, and the very words of prayer lead it off to other thoughts than those of prayer and of God. The very Ministers at God's Altar, little as they can, or wish to, read the heart, cannot but see that there is too often more reverence and devotion among the younger than among the elder of their flock. The first awe from without, unless it deepen into habitual reverence, wears off, and leaves the very surface cold and irreverent.

Nor dare we withhold the truth, that there is an especial danger of unworthy partaking of the Holy Eucharist. Because the full sin and profaneness in the Corinthian Church, and with it their full punishment, do not take place now, we are not therefore secure against some shade of both. *Their* sin was irreverence, whereby they failed to "discern the Lord's Body;" their punishment, that they "ate and drank damnation to themselves." But it is of the very nature of God's Word, that it applies, in endless degrees, to all our varied states; so that we cannot say, that because it reaches us not in its extremest sentence, therefore we wholly escape its condemnation. As the Commandments forbid not only the extremest sins of murder, and adultery, and theft, and covetousness, but each slightest shade of an angry, or impure, or covetous thought, so the failure to "discern the Lord's Body * " includes not only open profaneness and the sin of Judas, but every shade of irreverence and negligence, either in preparing to receive It, or of ourselves, when we have received It. And as the offence, so also is the degree of the punishment. Short of that extremest penalty, people even now "meet together, not for the better, but for the worse." Not in the most frequent Communion only or chiefly, but still more often among the rarer Communicants, there have been ever those who, com-

* 1 Cor. xi. 29.

ing without "the Wedding Garment," come to the hurt of their souls. They are ever such as fear it not. In that sad past when the soul was pursuing a wrong end, parting with God Whom she hoped not to part with, because she would not part with vanities which she knew not how fast she held, her bitterest sorrow, when awakened, has often been even rare yet profaned Communion.

Our safety is not in keeping away from our Redeemer, but in drawing near more lowly, and guarding ourselves more watchfully. *They* incur the risk of offending by not "discerning the Lord's Body" beforehand, who remit in their diligence in preparing their hearts, examine themselves lightly, are not careful to know what evil there is in them, or how it is to be healed, or look for no great benefit, not on account of their own unworthiness, but as though, if worthy, Heaven were not open to them to partake. *They* risk at the time, who labour not to impress their minds with the awfulness of the service whereat they present themselves; who gather not up their minds with all their power for this one thought, Whom they are to receive, and what for themselves or for others they need, and seek not that their unstayedness should be fixed by Him. *They* risk afterwards, who think that when their thanksgiving is finished, and they have been dismissed with the Blessing, their duties are ended, and return to their homes to be the same as before, forgetting, or not carefully cherishing, "what great things God hath done for them;" Who hath come to them; with Whom, if they were found worthy, they were made one, and He with them; Whom they bear about them: who watch not over themselves, lest they defile by any taint of sin what God has so hallowed; who having been strengthened, waste the Talent they have received, and are content to walk as feebly and irresolutely as before; who having been with their

Lord, seek not to remain with Him, but enter with as much eagerness as before into the distractions of the things of sense.

Increased Communion do require increased watchfulness, that we “receive not the Grace of God in vain.” To what end to seek to be strengthened, if we use not the strength given? to come oftener near our Lord, if not to remain nearer to Him? to seek more frequent cleansing, if not to remain more cleansed? to pray Him again and again to come under our roof, if not to entertain Him reverently, press Him to “abide with us,” live in and on His Presence, be with Him, wherever we are, love Him with a more whole heart, Who as He once gave Himself for us, so now so often giveth Himself to us.

Yet be we not dismayed, as though these things were too great for us. We see not at the time what great things God is doing for us. We need not fear that He will not do for us, more than we dare ask or think. Even amid the extremest sin of the Corinthians, St. Paul gives no other rule than, “let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup.” And then Communion was daily! Come we with true, and honest, and humble hearts; and what in us is lacking, He Who gave us what we have, will supply. Be we in earnest with ourselves, and He, our Compassionate Saviour, will have pity upon our infirmities. It is He who calleth us. Arise we and come to Him. He putteth alike into our hearts, our longings, and our fears; our longings, more and more, week by week, to possess Himself, be made one with Him; our fears, lest, coming unprepared, we miss the blessing we long for, and entail loss on ourselves. By both He is drawing us to Himself, and knitting us more closely to Him, making us such in whom He can dwell, and dwelling in those whom He has prepared.

It may be that, in the past times of our negligence, He withdrew the Communion from us, and caused them to be infrequent, lest we should injure ourselves. Now He is every where calling men to be His, and those who are His, to be more wholly His. He is calling to new degrees of devotedness, devotion, love; to higher, more self-denying, self-subduing service. He is setting a higher measure of Grace before us, not of mere amiable, benevolent, kindly characters, fulfilling with ease or integrity the ordinary duties of life, and promoting works of charity or religion, as occasion offers. He is teaching us to make Him, in all things, our End; to live the hidden life in Him; in all things to behold Him; to count all things loss or gain, as they fix our hearts on Him or divide them with Him; to desire nothing in comparison with Him; nothing, if need be, but Him; to make His Cross our badge, our glory, and our stay; His Wounds, our meat and drink; His Will, our only will; His Passion, our defence; His Death, our life; His Resurrection, the Source of our life, our one endless and unfailing Hope. And with these Calls He is vouchsafing to us new strength and life, to carry us, by His Indwelling, All-empowering Might, to the End of our being, our hopes, our fears, our sufferings, our disappointments, the faintnesses of our heart, the fadings of earth's brightest joys, even to the Mount of God, there not to hear of Him only "with the hearing of the ear,*" in "the still small Voice," but, with Unveiled Face, for ever to behold, for ever adore, for ever love, Himself.

Faint we not that we cannot realise all this at once. He ever leadeth His by "paths that we know not.†" Only now that He calleth us, follow we Him. "Commit" we "our ways unto Him." Take we the first step He biddeth us, and He will go before us, and we shall "hear His Voice and follow

* Job xlii. 5.

† Is. xlii. 16.

Him." By these increased Gifts, He calleth you to increased, more watchful service, more devoted love, brighter rewards in bliss.

Fear not, lest ye should not be able to persevere. The Gift we seek, if we seek It earnestly, will Itself bind us fast with the sure cords of love, and uplift our hearts, and knit them unto Him. It is "Life." What then should frequent Communion be, but manifold, multiplied Life? Fear we not that His Bounty is exhaustible, His Fulness cloying, His Love bounded. It was only to faithless hearts that the Manna seemed "light bread.*" We come to Him, "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," in Whom "dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead," Whose "Mercies fail not, but are new every morning.†" Where should be the limits of His Love, Who is Infinite? or of His Mercy to us, Who, being God, for our sakes became as we, that we might be as Himself? Have His Mercies been restrained towards us even by our unfaithfulness? and since His Mercy has thus overflowed toward us, amid negligence and sin, how much more when with penitent hearts, we desire to be filled with His Restoring Love! No! His Communication of His Love is bounded only by our capacities, and our capacities by our faithful longings. He is "the Bread of Life‡" to all, as He upholdeth all in life. Yet as the life of the Archangel is higher than the life of the worm, although both are upheld in life by Him, so has He, in the stores of His Sacramental Grace, a Fulness of Life and Love, an Ineffable Presence, "Torrents of pleasure," a soul-subduing awful Nearness, and transporting Union, as different from that, which He bestows at earlier stages, as the Archangel's life from that of us poor defiled worms of earth.

Force not yourselves, yet fear not. If He draw

* Num. xxii. 5.

† Lam. iii. 22, 23.

‡ S. John vi. 35.

us to this Heavenly Feast, let us follow Him. If He have not yet drawn us, pray we Him that He draw us, and make it Health and Safety to our souls.

The weekly Union with your Lord will become the very Centre, as it is the Fulness of your life. Your life will be spent either in thankfulness for the past, or longing for His coming Gift. And since the more we ask, the more He giveth, Who is "always more ready to give than we to pray," such practices as these have been found useful.

1. While you desire that He, the Source of all Grace and Love, should dwell in your soul, so especially ask at each Communion, that He would give you, with Himself, some special Grace, which you feel you most need, as opposed to "the sin which doth most easily beset you. * " Pray Him not only for love, or humility, or meekness, (and so as to every other grace,) but that He Himself would, by Himself, conform you to Him. For His Graces are His Own Gifts, through His In-dwelling by His Spirit. Thus, pray that you may be humble as He was "Meek and Lowly of heart;" fervent, as He prayed earnestly, and with His Bloody Sweat for us, in the garden; meek, as He was "led as a lamb to the slaughter," and prayed for His torturers then. And since the soul longs more earnestly, when it is gathered around one object, it is often best to pray for some one Grace. Desire this with your whole heart. So you will come to Holy Communion, not only with the general hope of receiving Grace and strength, but with the strong desire to be strengthened in this one Grace, wherein ye are now weakest. With this prayer, offer, on your part, by His Grace, to cut off this or that way of acting, wherein your infirmity shews itself, to do firmly this or that which it is now hard to do. Then examine thyself carefully, in the week following, on this one point. Persevere in this,

* Heb. xii. 1.

make this thy special examination before each Communion, and by the Grace of God you will gain much, both in earnestness of purpose, and in growth in Grace.

2. Since you desire that your Lord should "dwell in your heart," forget Him not, when ye have received Him. Collect yourself, from time to time, during the day, in His Presence; commune with Him. Pray Him, "Abide with me, Lord." Pray Him to guard thee, within and without, against all which may offend Him, to deepen in thee whatever Grace thou hast asked for. Watch jealously over every thought and member. Remember that your Lord dwelleth in you, and speak, act, and think, as in His Presence. Watch over all the inlets of your senses. Let not the eyes, which He has enlightened, wander after sights of vanity; nor the ears, which He has unstopped, be filled with sounds of this world, so that they hear not His still Voice; nor the taste, which has tasted Heavenly Food, be over-anxious about "the things which perish in the using;" nor the tongue, which (as was said of old,) has been "red-dened * with the Blood of the Lord," speak idle, or vain, or detracting or unloving words; nor the mind, which has been gathered in one in Him, be scattered amid the distractions of this world. We have offered up "ourselves, our souls and bodies," on the Altar of His Cross, as "a reasonable, holy, and living Sacrifice" unto God, to be united with His Atoning Sacrifice, and consumed by the Fire of His Love; see we that a subtle love of the world awake not again in us.

3. Learn, at least gradually, "Spiritual Communion" on other days, when thou mayest not receive Him in His Sacrament. All prayer calls Him into the soul. "When I call upon my God," exclaims a

* See note I to the Sermon, "The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent." p. 23.

Father, * in reverent awe, "I call Him into myself." "Thou callest upon God, when thou callest God into thee. Thou invitest Him in a manner into the mansion of thy heart." But it is a more solemn act consciously to call our Lord into ourselves. For how can we call Him into a Heart which has that within it which must offend His Holy Eyes? Yet we call Him Who cannot be defiled, to enter in and cleanse it. We call Him on Whom this day we call, that "our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most Precious Blood;†" to abide and "cleanse more and more from our wickedness" us whom He has so cleansed. So shall thy sense of thy need of His Presence, and thy longing be increased: and thou shalt hunger more for that Righteousness, for which thou daily longest. His Presence in thy soul shall become thy "Daily Bread;" and daily "hungering," thou shalt be daily "filled." He shall "enlarge the narrow mansion of thy soul, that He may enter in.‡" Communions in spirit detain Jesus in the soul which He hath visited, and prepare the soul to long for His fuller Presence.

4. For due preparation we need not fear that lawful occupations will not leave us time. Daily Communion was long the privilege of all Christians; still longer of our Western Churches. And yet St. Paul's command, "Let a man examine himself," was obeyed then. Be we only in earnest, or long to be so, and "The Lord will provide.§" He can make our whole life one preparation for His Coming to us, as each day should be for His Final Coming. As the light of day is shed around us, and we are conscious of its presence, and gladdened by it, and yet our

* S. Aug. Conf. i. . In Ps. xxx. En. iv. § 4. [Ps. xxxi. p. 265. Ox. Tr. at length.]

† Service for Holy Communion. § Gen. xxii. 8, 14

‡ S. Aug. Conf. i. 6.

eyes behold only the more distinctly all upon which it falls, so may the Sun of our souls be ever present to them, and we rejoice in His Presence, and yet see and do our several duties, not only unhindered by our thoughts of God, but more distinctly, and with readier mind and will. Seek we, amid our daily duties or refreshments, to win our thoughts more to Him, to consecrate to Him the several portions of the day and our larger courses of action, and, as we learn how, each several action. And for more immediate preparation, frequent Communicants, living, as they should, in habitual watchfulness, as they will have a shorter period to review, so having learnt more watchful ways, their souls will lie more open to themselves, and they will learn with less of effort, to exercise more readily a closer search. Their accounts with themselves will be in better order, and so reviewed more easily. Then also win we, if we can, some time for collectedness and retirement, as by earlier rising, or when we may, by stillness and holier reading on the preceding evening, or in its later hours. Above all, do not neglect preparation or thanksgiving on any day, because thou canst not use all the prayers thou wouldest. God does not look on the length of the prayers, but on the desire of the heart.* He Who accepts the "cup of cold water given to a disciple in His name," from those who have no larger gift to offer, will accept brief prayers darted up, out of the midst even of occupation, to Him. He Who accepted "the two mites," looks not at the amount of the gift, but at the store out of which it is given, and the faith and love which offer it. "Lord, have mercy!" from the lips of a drowning man, has been a whole volume of prayer. "I have sinned against

* "Longing desire prayeth always though the tongue be silent. If thou art ever longing, thou art ever praying. When stayeth prayer? When desire groweth cold."—S. Aug. on the N. T. Sermon. xxx. [80 Ben.] § 7, p. 242. Oxf. Tr. see also on Ps. xxxvii. § 14.

the Lord,*" restored David from his deep fall, to be again "the man after God's Own Heart." "Lord, cleanse me," may gather into one cry of penitence the miseries of a whole life. "O Good Jesu, give me a burning love for Thee," may bring into one ardent longing the love of years. "O Good Jesu, prepare my heart for Thyself," often said, may blend in one, humility, penitence, faith, hope, earnest longing, love. Of time time, too, it may be said, "If thou hast much, give plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little: for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the Day of necessity.†" It has been advised, when Communion is weekly, to make the three first days of the week, thanksgiving; the three last, preparation: or thanksgiving and preparation may be blended into one. For we ask for His Blessed Presence, not as though we had It not; we thank Him for His Gift, not as though we needed not that It be renewed.

5. Joy in our Lord, implies sorrow for what displeases Him; the Remembrance of His Death, suffering and reverent sympathy with Him; the Feast on "the Lamb Who was slain,‡" must be eaten with the "bitter herbs" of repentance for our own sins; before the renewal of Easter-Day, must be the renewed memory of the Passion. A weekly Feast should be entered upon through the lowly portal of a weekly Fast. Use then, at least, some self-denial as ye may bear it, on the weekly Commemoration of His Passion; and in sight of His Sufferings, seek we to obtain shame, and compunction of heart, and true penitence for our own sins.

Do we this with faithful hearts, and He Who seeth in secret, will "meet us in the way of righteousness,§" and guide our steps, and reward openly the work, "which He hath wrought in us." He will

* 2 Sam. xii. 13. † Tob. iv. See Service for Holy Communion.

‡ Rev. v. 12; Ex. xii. 8.

§ Is. lxiv. 5.

make each Lord's Day an Easter-Day to us, in which our Risen Lord will appear to us, "talk to us by the way," "open our hearts," and into our opened hearts pour in His Life, and Presence, and Love. He will anew cleanse the defilements which we bewail; fill up the scars our sins have left; repair the decays, which in our forgetfulness or wilfulness we contracted; heal* our infirmities, that in Mercy and Loving-kindness He may crown us. He will make each Lord's Day a herald of that glorious Easter-Morn, when "shadows shall flee away, †" and night, and time, and sin, and infirmity, and death shall be no more; when all who are His, shall for ever meet in His Presence, and joy before Him.

Oh what will that Blessed Morn be, when, if "found in Him," we shall not behold Him, as now, afar off, but "face to Face," "in His Beauty; ‡" when He Who has tended us all our lives long, called us to His Feet, made us members of His Body, Who bore our sins upon the Cross, bore so long time with our frailties, and wilfulness, and sins, interceded for us, fed us with His Own Body, washed us with His Own Blood, was Himself our hidden Life,—He, our Redeemer, Mediator, Who wept for our sins, and gave us tears to weep our own, Who became Man for our salvation, that He might make us gods, §—shall appear to us openly, and call to His Side those who would at last be kept by Him and whom He has kept! Oh! how in the Dawn of that Ineffable Brightness, shall we rejoice, if, when in this life He called us to a nearer Communion with Him, and a more devoted service, and stricter trying of our ways, and more exact obedience, we hearkened to His Call! And yet that Dawn shall be but the opening of an Endless Bliss, which we then shall not yet

* Ps. ciii. 3. 4.

† Cant. ii. 15.

‡ Is. xxxiii. 17.

§ See above, p. 233, note 1. See also Nouet's *Life of Christ in Glory*, p. 385, n. 2.

know; Bliss, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man;" "the Joy of our Lord," the Joy which our Redeeming Lord and God hath in the Unity of the Eternal Godhead, and into which the Joy of our own Lord, His redeemed, shall enter.

O blessed Jesu! give us grace so to approach Thee here "with reverence and godly fear," that we in that Day may behold Thee without fear. Cleanse our hearts to receive Thee, and so dwell in us whom Thou hast cleansed. So pour Thy Love into our hearts, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgement. May He join us more closely to His Side, that we be never parted from It, but these glimpses of Heaven and unseen Union with Him, be the foretaste and earnest of that Unspeakable Feast, when we, who hunger now, shall be wholly filled, because we shall wholly love.

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